

[p. 76a]

439 rero or even from the Pacific Ocean. Even men who are not regular traders will go on local market. Finally, it should be noted that individuals often visit markets, especially those in Paracho or during fiestas at nearby towns, and make purchases of needed goods. [494] Especially since the highway has brought bus service to the town, for important purchases a man may even go to Uruapan. It is not uncommon for well-to-do men, for example, to have garments made to order by the tailors in Uruapan.

It is impossible to compile from present data a complete list of the products imported into Cherán. The list extends from chile and beans to horses and sewing machines. Many articles are available only on special occasions. For example, the almost universally used type of water jar in Cherán is made only in Patamban, and is offered for sale only on the occasion of the fiesta of the patron saint in October. Householders must anticipate their yearly needs of these fragile (but quite long-lived) articles at this time; otherwise they are forced to attend a fiesta in some other town and pick up a different plain style of jar made in Uruapan or La Cañada.

438 Nearly all goods sold in the stores are imported (except occasional local products such as clothing). A considerable list of these goods is given in the discussion of price (p. 88). Tarascan products imported include fish and tules from the Lake area; hat braid of palm straw, chairs, tables, beds, and various wooden objects from Paracho; pottery from Santa Fe, Quiroga, Patamban, La Cañada, and the "hot country," or *tierra caliente* (the last is non-Tarascan); axes from Tingambato; knives, machetes, plow points, and jewelry from Nahuatzen; oils, garlic, spices, and vegetables from Zacapu and the Lake region; *rebozos* and cloth from Paracho, Nahuatzen, and elsewhere; pigs from La Cañada; beans from the Lake region; chiles from various places; and a variety of fruits. The latter include bananas, coconuts (from non-Tarascan sources), sweet and sour lemons, oranges, guavas, mameyas, plums, mangoes, watermelons, cantaloups, avocados, zapotes of all sorts, and cherimoyas.

439 From non-Tarascan sources, but still outside the more conventional commercial channels, are

44/ Women are  
 439 believed to be more resistant to the illnesses of  
 [427] *tierra caliente*, and tales are told of women who  
 saved their husbands by nursing them or by  
 bringing them back to the healthful highlands.  
 For this reason, traders rarely go alone, al-  
 though large parties are rare. The major  
 [164] disease appears to be malaria. Insects, espe-  
 cially one attacking the feet, are mentioned as  
 a great bother.

[674] Robbers are also a source of danger; how-  
 ever, the most traveled route—that to Guerrero  
 —is said to be entirely safe. Some of the  
 greatest dangers on the route to Coalcomán or  
 Colima seem to have been in Tarascan territory.  
 The village of Capacuaro had a particularly  
 evil reputation at one time.

[492] Goods are ordinarily transported by burros.  
 A poor man may have to carry goods on his  
 back. The *arrieros* never ride except when  
 [497] seriously ill. An exception is that journeys to  
 Celaya are made on the train, while nearby  
 [494] trips may sometimes be made by bus since  
 construction of the highway.

The first step in a trading expedition is the  
 assembling of goods for the trip. These may  
 consist of pears from Cherán; apples from  
 Pichataro; wooden products ("*tornillo*") from  
 Paracho; sweetpotatoes from San Francisco;  
 fine pottery (not cooking ware) from La  
 Cañada, Guadalajara, or Quiroga; oils and  
 spices from Pátzcuaro; dolls, pottery, and other  
 goods from Celaya. Most of the goods carried  
 by Cherán traders, however, are local in origin,  
 i.e., within the Tarascan area. In such cases,  
 trade goods either are assembled by one or  
 more short preliminary purchasing trips or  
 are bought en route. Guadalajara pottery re-  
 quires a 7- or 8-day trip each way with burros.  
 Celaya goods, as stated, involve a trip by train.

On the return trip various products are  
 brought. From Guerrero come dried fish, dried  
 beef, gourds, gourd containers, coconuts, and  
 cheese, the last being most important. Few  
 data were obtained on the products brought  
 from Coalcomán, as few Cherán traders make  
 this trip, but cheese and dried beef are prob-  
 ably the most important items. However, the  
 one trader to give specific information bought  
 beeswax. Chiles are brought from Colima.

Generally the goods brought back are not  
 sold until Cherán is reached. Then they are

441 Paracho and brings back coconuts and dried  
 439 meat. He normally travels only a half day.  
 487 (However, his half day would mean a dawn  
 start and continuing normally until midafter-  
 noon.) His stops are as follows: Pichataro,  
 Sirawén, Ario, Las Palmas, La Playa, Cayaco,  
 Guadalupe, Las Balsas, Corcoles, La Limón,  
 Tepehuaje, Colmeneros, La Unión, Pantla,  
 Puerto Sijuatanejo, San Geronimito, and  
 Petatlán.

441 *Arrieros* probably have superior techniques  
 [492] for handling burros. *Criolina* is carried for  
 treating saddle sores, and burros are shod  
 "when the burro catches cold in his feet."  
 Dysentery ("*posición*") is the most frequent  
 cause of loss of burros on trips.

[492] *Arrieros* also observe special ceremonies. A  
 candle and prayer are offered to San Antonio  
 before going on a trip, and thanks are rendered  
 on return. The *arrieros* also maintain a  
*mayordomía* for San Antonio, which is de-  
 scribed elsewhere.

In general, knowledge of the economics of  
 the *arrieros'* activities is unsatisfactory. It  
 would be extremely difficult to gain an accurate  
 idea of the amount of goods exchanged by this  
 method or to discover the monetary or other  
 rewards obtained by the *arriero*.

178 The importance of the *arriero* class un-  
 doubtedly will wane rapidly with the extension  
 of highways and truck trails. Already the  
 importance of the *arriero* in the Coalcomán  
 region has greatly diminished as a result of  
 truck trails opened up in recent years. When  
 a direct connection is made between the high-  
 land and the developing truck trail system in  
 the Balsas Basin, the *arriero* probably will  
 rapidly disappear.

#### TRANSPORTATION

492 As has been indicated at various points in  
 the preceding pages, the burro is the most com-  
 mon means of transportation still, supplemented  
 occasionally by horses or mules. Poor traders  
 may even make long journeys carrying their  
 goods on their backs. Nevertheless, a revolu-  
 tion in transportation is under way in Cherán.

494 One alteration in the transportation picture  
 is the truck which picks up bulk goods in Cherán  
 for markets that formerly were closed to these  
 items. As much as 4,000 kilos of wheat has

- 494 left in a single load. As yet, though, the most important influence of the highway is the frequent bus service. The regular buses, connecting with buses for Guadalajara, and going directly to or from Morelia, and Mexico City, pass through to and from Uruapan about once an hour during the day. In addition, smaller buses from Uruapan to Purépero and Nahuatzen pass by several times a day. As a consequence, individual vendors often go to market by bus. Women take foodstuffs or herbs to Uruapan for the Sunday market regularly. Others may visit the market at Paracho merely as a recreation. Not a few in the village have made a trip or two to Mexico City.

- 556 Modern transport has even reached into Cherán itself. Three of the more well-to-do men in the town have purchased a 1½-ton truck, which carries freight to Uruapan or Morelia at 1½ centavos a kilo. On Sundays it also operates as a "wildcat" (i.e., unlicensed) bus to Paracho. The fare is 25 centavos plus a charge for bulky bundles; for example, 20 centavos for three bundles of palm leaves. Although trucks are not supposed to carry passengers, a satisfactory working arrangement has been made with the traffic police.

#### STOREKEEPERS

- 443 Cherán is unique among large Tarascan towns in that virtually all storekeepers are natives. A few of the storekeepers are large farmers whose families run a store on the side, but most of them made their start as storekeepers although they may now also be farmers. As one of the successful storekeepers explained, less capital is required to start a store than is needed to buy adequate farm lands. According to this same informant, if a man has fifty pesos, he can get a hundred pesos worth of goods, and if he has a place to operate, he is established in business. Moreover, the work is not as hard as farming. In addition, as people in Cherán have the same idea of living standards, business volume in most stores is small, so small that it is said not to have attracted the Mestizos. [511] It is asserted that only those accustomed to Tarascan living standards and ways can succeed in making a living as a storekeeper in Cherán.

The more able storekeepers not only sell

435 exceptions, it may perhaps fairly be said that prices are the expression of Cherán values with respect to goods and services. Moreover, the major price determination at Cherán is not by local standards but in terms of fluctuations in Mexican economy as a whole. It is not supply and demand in Cherán which determines most prices, but supply and demand (and Government controls) in the surrounding regions. The extent to which this is true is a measure of the degree to which Tarascan economy is linked with that of Mexico, a relationship that is much closer than is ordinarily recognized by Mexican students.

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The prices of the most important commodities produced in Cherán, corn and wheat, are determined by what will be paid by purchasers from outside the town. In similar fashion, the prices of most imported goods are determined by the wholesale prices existing in centers such as Uruapan, Purépero, and Pátzcuaro. The price of labor is likewise determined, although to a somewhat lesser degree, by the price labor can command in markets outside of Tarascan territory.

[465] It is interesting to observe, however, that this influence does not extend far out of Michoacán. The Government, in building the highway with local labor, is reported to have paid only a peso a day, somewhat less than the legal minimum wage. As it was, the high wages (by Michoacán standards) tended to disrupt the local wage structure.

Within this major framework of price determination, of course, there are subsidiary exceptions. The price of pears, for example, will fluctuate somewhat in relation to local supply and demand, and the same is true of other fruits which have not yet found wider markets. Similar conditions obtain with respect to cheese and fish. Land prices in general seem to bear little relation to productivity and yield, although here our analysis may be at fault.<sup>22</sup> The preference for exercising gleaning rights in the corn harvest in place of higher wages also shows that in some areas of Cherán economics, nonmonetary values operate.

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494 In general, the coming of the highway is bringing higher prices for local products.

<sup>22</sup>It is possible that a more adequate analysis of labor costs might show our estimates of net yields from farming are too high.

[p. 876]

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Tables 8 and 9 give the prices of some goods and products. Although little evidence is yet visible at Cherán, at Chilchota in La Cañada, where the highway has been in use longer, it was said that the price of chickens had risen from 50 centavos to \$1.50 with corresponding rises in other products.

TABLE 8.—Prices of some important goods and products in Cherán

| Goods or products                      | Number or quantity | Price         |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Maize (shelled).....                   | Liter.....         | \$0.04-\$0.07 |
|                                        | Fanega.....        | 5.00-7.00     |
| Wheat.....                             | Medida.....        | .55           |
|                                        | Carga.....         | 23.00-27.00   |
| Beans.....                             | Liter.....         | .15-.28       |
| Squash.....                            | Each.....          | .25-.50       |
| Cabbage.....                           | do.....            | .03-.08       |
| Pears.....                             | Per 100.....       | 2.00-13.00    |
| Peaches.....                           | do.....            | .40           |
| Honey.....                             | Half liter.....    | .30           |
| Wax.....                               | Kilo.....          | 2.25-2.50     |
| Bread.....                             | 2, small.....      | .05           |
|                                        | 1, large.....      | .10           |
| Rais de Paja.....                      | Kilo.....          | 2.25-2.50     |
| Beef.....                              | do.....            | .70           |
| Pig (fattened for butchering).....     | 1 (live).....      | 40.00-75.00   |
| Sheep.....                             | do.....            | 2.50-5.00     |
| Charcoal.....                          | Kilo.....          | .02-.03       |
| Planks.....                            | Down.....          | 6.00-7.00     |
| Railroad ties (Oak, pine, or fir)..... | Each.....          | .60           |
| Shakes (5 cuartas long).....           | Bundle (400).....  | 5.00 and up   |
| Handwoven wool cloth.....              | Yard.....          | 1.00          |

<sup>1</sup> In Zamora or tierra caliente.

## WEALTH AND PROPERTY

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The major wealth of Cherán is forest and agricultural land. As has been indicated previously, all lands capable of permanent cultivation are privately owned, the remainder belonging to the community and being open to the use of all community members. One informant mentioned a possible exception to this statement, saying that the one large land holding of prerevolutionary Cherán has been taken by the Government and offered for sale to Cherán residents. The informant believed some lands in this holding were still unsold, but no further information was secured. In any case, the incident does not alter the fundamental pattern of Cherán land-holding.

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In terms of individual wealth, the basic Cherán concepts are those of rural Mexico. Wealth is primarily land and silver. Cattle loom less important, partly because they are not owned in large numbers, partly because the revolutionary period taught the people of Cherán that cattle are a less stable form of wealth. The man who owns sufficient land, however, has an essentially inalienable resource by which any losses of less stable types of

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large mestizo towns (who ride in trucks and busses)—all serve as distributing agents.

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The market (*uasájpikuanu*, or "the place where people sit").—Sunday is the most important market day for the Tarascans.<sup>122</sup> Large groups of Indians from neighboring pueblos flock to the regular markets held in the large mestizo towns within or on the edge of the Tarascan area. Since colonial times Paracho has been the largest Indian commercial center of the Sierra. To the south Los Reyes and Uruapan are the exchange centers for *tierra caliente* and *tierra fría* merchandise.<sup>123</sup> A lesser number of Indians attend the northern market towns: Zamora, Tingtindín, Puréparo, Zacapu, and Chilchota (the commercial center for the La Cañada pueblos). Generally speaking, each large Sunday market draws upon a certain Indian area defined by a walking or riding distance of one day or less (map 21). On occasion, however, the Pátzcuaro or Uruapan *tianguis* is visited by Indians who live more than 1 day's travel away. In the Sierra often the entire family attends the regular market, leaving Saturday with handicrafts or farm products (usually fruit, chickens, or eggs) packed on burros, and arriving at the plaza at night.<sup>124</sup> Sunday morning is a time of brisk trading. By afternoon most of the traders have sold their wares, purchased supplies, and have departed for their respective pueblos. The Lake Pátzcuaro fishers get to market in boats, carrying fish and vegetables to Pátzcuaro, Erongaricuaró, and Quiroga to trade for maize, wheat, and firewood.

Lesser markets are regularly held in a few smaller Indian towns. For example, there is a Sunday market at Charapan, attended by people from Cocucho, Urapicho, Corupo, San Felipe, and Nurio. On Saturdays and Mondays there is some commercial activity in Cherán, as professional traders pass through the town going to and coming from the Sunday Uruapan market (Beals, 1946, p. 80). Again, on Thursdays

[Text continues top of p. 73A—Analysis]

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<sup>122</sup> An important exception is the Pátzcuaro market held on Fridays and Sundays. A minor fish market occurs also on Tuesdays.

<sup>123</sup> Formerly Parícutin was one of the largest *tierra caliente-tierra fría* markets in Michoacán, but since the close of the colonial era it has ceded most of its trade to Los Reyes nearby. Important Santa markets are still held in Parícutin however.

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<sup>124</sup> Within the last 5 years the pueblos along the Uruapan highway have ridden buses or taxis to market. Since 1940 similar transport has been extended to Charapan, Zitrota, and intermediate pueblos. Moreover, during the dry season lumber trucks haul loads of men and women from some Sierra towns to market.

[74-b]

443 Like the *huacalero*, the *arriero* in the Tarascan  
 492 area has functioned chiefly as a commercial inter-  
 439 *fría*. During the colonial period, however, some  
 mule skimmers extended operations into the north-  
 ern mining districts. Moreover, various mestizo  
 towns in Tarasca became *arriero* centers—strategic  
 points along the main routes where mule trains  
 met, animals were sold and traded, supplies pur-  
 chased, and merchandise exchanged. Such towns  
 became residences of many muleteers. A series  
 of these centers lies within the *tierra caliente* and  
 includes Apatzingán, Huetamo, and Coyuca.  
 Another series is located within the *tierra tem-  
 plada*: Uruapan, Ario, Tacámbaro. Other centers  
 are found in the *tierra fría*: Cotija, and, formerly,  
 Parangaricutiro and Jiquilpan. Most of these  
 towns still function as *arriero* centers, and although  
 motor transportation is continually replacing the  
 mule and burro, some of them will continue to  
 serve as way stations for fuel and repairs and  
 collecting points for products carried out by  
 trucks.

443 Since the construction of motor roads in many  
 494 parts of Tarasca, former *arrieros* and *huacaleros*  
 have begun to use public busses and semipublic  
 trucks to transport merchandise. Pottery vendors,  
 for example, stand for hours along the highway,  
 hailing through-trucks to take them and their  
 goods to Guadalajara, Morelia, or Mexico City.  
 Moreover, heavy sugar and *cascalote* trucks now  
 operate from Uruapan, Pátzcuaro, and Los Reyes  
 into the *tierra caliente*.

442 The wholesale buyers represent a modern type  
 of merchant, who with the advent of road con-  
 struction have begun to penetrate into the  
 Tarascan area. Grain dealers from Morelia,  
 Zamora, and Uruapan now run their trucks into  
 the Sierra towns to buy surplus wheat. Again,  
 many woodworkers in Paracho are on contract  
 to city wholesalers for turned work and guitars,  
 which are collected at intervals in trucks or pas-  
 senger cars.